

Week Ending Friday, August 1, 1997

The President's Radio Address

July 26, 1997

Good morning. I am pleased to be joined here at the White House by the young men of American Legion Boys Nation, an outstanding youth organization that has inspired thousands of young people, including me, to serve our country by serving in our communities.

I want to talk with you today about what we must do to make citizen service a part of every American's life for his or her entire lifetime. As I said at the Presidents' service summit in Philadelphia this past April, the era of big Government may be over, but big challenges remain for America, and they require an era of big citizenship, an era with new partnerships between Government and business and labor, between wealthy, middle class, and poor Americans, between cities, suburbs, and rural areas and across all racial lines. At the Presidents' service summit, thousands of Americans pledged their commitment to service. As we prepare to go forward into a new century, every one of us must join them so that we can meet our challenges and come together as one America.

For the past 4½ years, my administration has worked to give every American a chance to serve. We want to spark a renewed sense of obligation, a new sense of duty, and a new season of service all across our Nation.

Of everything we've done to meet that challenge, I am proudest of AmeriCorps, our national service organization that has helped more than 70,000 young Americans all over the country to earn money for college while serving in their communities. AmeriCorps members do real work to address critical problems, from cleaning the environment to helping at-risk children learn to read, to working with police to keep our streets safe, to helping our Nation reach record levels of child immunization.

At the service summit, one of the goals for young Americans announced by the Presidents and General Powell was that every young American should be challenged and given the chance to do citizen service. To support that goal, I announced at the summit that our administration would provide 50,000 new AmeriCorps scholarships over the next 5 years to organizations that offer young people a chance to serve. I am pleased to say today that 77 organizations have answered that challenge by offering to sponsor 10,000 new AmeriCorps members next year alone. I thank them for their commitment.

The success of AmeriCorps proves that citizen service works. And it's only one of the many things the National Government is doing to work in partnership with citizens, businesses, and civic groups. Our administration is busy following up on the commitments we made in Philadelphia at the service summit. This fall, for example, the Department of Agriculture will hold a food recovery summit to help organize volunteers to distribute food to the needy. The Justice Department's new mentoring alliance will link children in need with volunteer mentors. And the Department of Health and Human Services' new partnership with the Girl Scouts of America will teach girls about the dangers of drugs. In all these ways, we are committed to encouraging service throughout American life.

Commitment to community should be an ethic that our children learn as early as possible, so that they carry it with them throughout their lives. That is why I have called on every State to make service a part of the curriculum in high school or even middle school. There are many creative ways to do this, including giving students credit for service, incorporating service into course work, putting service on a student's transcript, or even requiring service as a condition of graduation, as Maryland does.

In addition to the AmeriCorps scholarship program we announced at the service summit, last year we took additional steps to encourage our young people to serve in their communities while in high school. We said we would offer \$500 scholarships to high school juniors and seniors with the best record of service in their class if their communities and private service organizations would match that amount.

Just a year later, I am proud to say that some of our Nation's most prominent service organizations have answered that call. Today I'm pleased to announce that 1,600 high school students—some of whom are standing with me today—will receive scholarships of up to \$1,000 to help pay for college. The American Legion, the Kiwanis Club, the Rotary Club, the Elks Club, the Lions Club, the Junior Leagues, and the Miss America Foundations, these are community groups that are the glue that hold America together. And now they're giving our young people another reason to give something back to our communities.

This is just the first year of the national service scholars program. I know that next year it will be even bigger. Our goal is to make this program available in every high school, so that every high school principal in America can stand before a graduating class and announce the name of a national service scholar. And with the support of groups like those who have already committed to help, I am confident we can make it happen.

Something very important to our Nation occurred at the Presidents' service summit. There, people from all walks of life looked beyond their differences and came together around the common goal of serving our country, to give all our young people a chance to have a better life. This is the way we have to meet our challenges: business, working together with government and labor, religious and community groups joining forces, people lending a hand to help one another. Today we take another important step to build on that progress.

The spirit of the service summit is stronger than ever, and it's up to us, all of us, to keep it alive as we move forward together into a new century.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 2:02 p.m. on July 25 in the East Room at the White House for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on July 26. In his remarks the President referred to Gen. Colin L. Powell, USA (ret.), former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Opening Remarks at the Lake Tahoe Presidential Forum in Incline Village, Nevada

July 26, 1997

Thank you very much. First of all, ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank all of you who had anything to do with these efforts in working with us over the last several months. The members of the Cabinet and the Deputy Secretaries have been acknowledged. The Members of the Congress have been acknowledged. The other distinguished State officials from California and Nevada have been acknowledged. But there are a lot of people who work for these Federal agencies at other levels who have just been out here killing themselves for the last few months to try to make this a good, successful 2 days. And to all the citizens who worked with them and to all the Federal employees who are here, I want to thank all of you for what you did to help these last 2 days be successful. In addition, there are four people who worked with us to help make these workshops and this forum a success: Katie McGinty, Jim Lyons, Tom Tuchmann, Phil Bayles. I can't count—six—Jeff Bailey and Dave Van Note. And I want to thank them.

I want to say a special word of appreciation to the Members of Congress from these two States who have proved that this is a bipartisan, perhaps even a nonpartisan endeavor, that we all have a stake, not just as Westerners, but as Americans, in not only preserving Lake Tahoe but, if possible, reversing some of the difficulties of the last 2 years.

But I would be remiss if I did not say a special word of thanks to the person who thought this idea up and got my commitment months ago—months ago—to show up, if you'll forgive me, come hell or high water. And here we are in the middle of the budget negotiations we're trying to finish today back in Washington, but I am here because I